

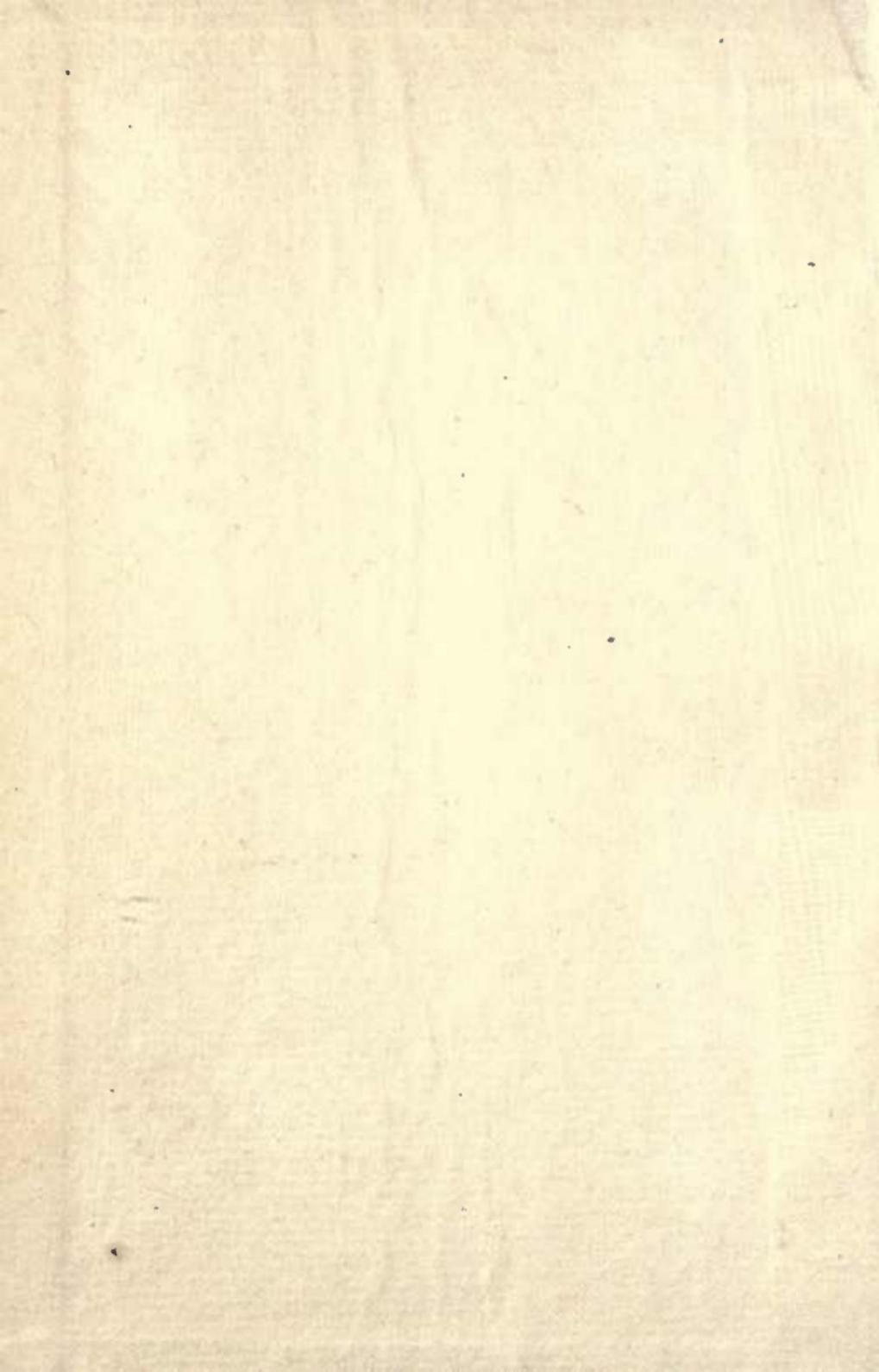
THE ROMANCE
of
L'Aiglon



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THE ROMANCE OF L'AIGLON

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THE ROMANCE
OF
L'Aiglon

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION
From the French of
CAROLUS
By
J. PAUL WILSON

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THE ROMANCE OF L'AIGLON

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CHAPTER I

L'AIGLON

THE revolution of July has just taken place. The Bourbon dynasty, restored at the cost of a great deal of effort by the sovereigns of the Holy Alliance, has just disappeared, followed by the rage of the populace.

Let us enter the old chateau of Schönbrunn, the imperial residence of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

In a lofty apartment overlooking the terraces and gardens of the palace, beneath that famous platform, La Gloriette, where, on clear days, one can see

the spires of St. Étienne, the cathedral of Vienna, a young man is reading by the light of a desk-lamp. The great chateau clock has just sounded the hour of midnight. The night is brilliant with stars; and through the open window comes the call of the sentinels, such a proceeding serving an excellent purpose in keeping them awake.

The young man, who is tall, very pale, and very slender, raises his head in an abstracted manner. He is dressed in the Austrian uniform, and his brow, grave and sad, seems to indicate noble but bitter thoughts. With feverish hands he turns over a pile of parchments before him, and the further he reads the more does his countenance contract and his face darken.

“Marengo! Wagram! Austerlitz!” he murmurs in a low voice; “Waterloo!” and his head drops. A hot tear springs to his eye. At every vibration of the clock he trembles visibly, as if his

heart were too big for his body and were going to burst—as if, despite his youth, he had no more illusions and only waited for death to free him from his troubles.

Meanwhile the voices of the sentinels continue to break in upon him, and seem to make a dismal appeal to him in the silence of the night.

Marengo, Wagram, Austerlitz! What has he to do with those sinister names? He is too young to have been present at any of those butcheries. His delicate hand apparently could not support the sword, the handle of which, inlaid with precious stones, glitters in one corner of the room at the head of his bed.

He continues his reading.

Rapidly he casts the pages he has finished on the carpet of his room. But the cold night air interrupts him ere long. He rises, trembling, and appears before us clearly.

Who is this youth who dreams of battles, and weeps as he reads the story

of Waterloo? An Austrian officer, as his uniform would proclaim? An aide-de-camp in attendance upon Francis I., the head of the Austrian dynasty?

No.

One lovely morning in the year 1811 the Paris populace came swarming out on the streets and public squares like an immense river that has burst beyond its banks. On the face of each individual was an expression of joy mingled with anxiety. In the Tuileries a group of physicians surrounded Marie Louise awaiting her deliverance. A little while afterwards the cannon's voice at the Invalides announced to France and to the world that an heir was born to the soldier whom fortune had crowned Cæsar. He who was called the King of Rome had just been ushered into the world.

The young king's infancy was much like that of the other mortals called by destiny to rule over nations. His mother, however, had a narrow, contracted char-

acter, which was not improved by the rigid restrictions of the etiquette which obtains at the Austrian court. He rarely saw the man-god whom he tremblingly called "father."

Then came the evil days—lost battles, exile, and the bitter thought ever present in his mind that he could not give the small boon of a kiss to the dying Prometheus. But fate decreed that he should have a chance still to make his name known to mankind.

The Eagle, galled by his thongs—nailed, as it were, to the arid rocks of a southern solitude—had spent his last days hoping great things for his son, whom he was never to see again.

Like a sorry bird that a puff of wind has blown from its nest, and that a laborer picks up and gives to his children for a plaything, the Eaglet fell to earth when the Eagle was borne away, and went to hide his griefs and nurse his aspirations in the chateau of Schön-

brunn. Here he spent many long, weary, monotonous days in the company of Francis I., his grandfather, and the wary Prince de Metternich.

It is the Aiglon—the Eaglet—whom we have just seen dressed in an Austrian uniform, running eagerly through the Bulletins of the Grand Armée, trembling at the spectacle of his father's victories and shedding a tear at the recollection of Waterloo.

CHAPTER II

VIOLETS

ON the morning following the day when we saw the son of Napoleon (to whom his grandfather had given the title of *Duc de Reichstadt*) reading the Bulletins, the young man entered the gardens and, rapidly crossing the marble terraces and the parterres of flowers kept in order by an army of mercenaries, gained that part of the park where stood the cheerful cottage of the chief gardener.

In this modest lodge, surrounded with flowers, lived an old man, a former soldier of the imperial wars—one of the survivors of that heroic phalanx which died but did not surrender. Old Silvère, as his name was, lived there in modest style by means of the pension he received

as a former sergeant of the Guard and his earnings as chief gardener of the castle. A waif, picked up one Palm Sunday by a flower-girl at the door of the Church of St. Sulpice, he had been brought up on the Paris pavement; and, upon the death of his mother by adoption, without relations or friends, he set out to join the army; and made the tour of Europe to the sound of the drum, receiving many blows and returning them with interest.

The Emperor, who admired brave men, had particularly noticed him; and when the young King of Rome took his daily airing on the terrace of the Tuileries the courtiers were not a little surprised to see, in the midst of the swarm of dames d'honneur who followed his carriage, a sergeant of Grenadiers tightly laced in his tunic and on whose breast glittered the star of the brave. It was Silvère, whom the interest of the Emperor had attached to the person of his son; and

the presence of this simple warrior, in the midst of the splendid uniforms and graceful feminine toilets, seemed to typify something for the child of that blind, passionate tenderness that the whole army had bestowed on his father. The devotion of this humble creature had survived even misfortune; and while the generals, smothered with honors and favors and gorged with riches, hastened to forget the name of the man who had raised them from nothing, in order that they might make their peace with the new authorities, the old soldier remained in the service of his young master, and succeeded, by the help of the latter, in spite of innumerable difficulties and the opposition of Metternich, in being promoted to the office of chief gardener of the park of Schönbrunn.

When the young duke reached the light grating which separated from the road the little garden where Silvère lovingly tended his roses, he was surprised

to descry his old servitor promenading up and down the walks of his little domain in the company of a ravishingly beautiful young girl, whose features, up to that time, he had never observed.

Dark, slender, graceful, of an ideal beauty, and with a bearing full of grace and modesty, the stranger, as she walked, stooped down toward the flowers and seemed to inhale their perfume with delight.

At the sight of the prince, a vivid blush, which suffused her cheeks and even her neck, made her more enchanting still.

“Monseigneur,” said Silvère, uncovering his gray head, “will your Highness allow me to present to you Colette, my daughter by adoption? Her school-days are over, and she has come here late in the evening of my life to bring a little sunshine into my solitary abode. She is a child of one of my brothers-in-arms, who fell at my side, and I have tried to

fulfil the duties of a father toward her. The Emperor, appreciating the services of a brave soldier, permitted Colette to attend the academy at St. Denis. The young student," he continued with a kind smile, " did great credit to her instructors, and the ladies there, not being able to teach her anything more, wished to find a husband for her; but the dear child remembered the old soldier who had so often rocked her to sleep in those far-off days, and, learning of my loneliness in my voluntary exile, flew to me at once to console and comfort my declining years."

The prince bowed respectfully to this young girl, whose devotion surrounded her with a new aureole.

" So you come from France, Mademoiselle," said he, with a sigh. " From France—from Paris, perhaps, where I was born. You are a fortunate being—you may one day return thither. You are destined to breathe again the air of that dear land, to hear its language; alas!

those are things denied to poor exiles, and, above all, denied to me. You doubtless admire these roses; they are possessed of a beauty comparable to your own. As I came I saw you hovering lovingly over them, drinking in their perfume. *Eh bien!* As for me, I hate them—they belong to a foreign country. There is nothing of interest to me here. I care for nothing—neither the people nor anything else. But there! how ungrateful I am. I make an exception in favor of this devoted old man, who has never quitted me since I lay in my cradle," and he offered his hand to the old servant, who took it and kissed it respectfully.

Tears came into the young man's eyes, and his face, which was melancholy before, became darker than ever.

Colette advanced nearer toward him, and, opening her corsage modestly, drew out a letter and a small bunch of violets. The latter still sent forth a delicate per-

fume, though the flowers were already dry and faded.

“Monseigneur,” said she, bending low before him, “will your Imperial Highness permit an humble dependent to offer you these flowers? On the eve of my departure from my country—from that Paris of which you spoke just now—I went to make my adieu to the devoted women who had watched so faithfully over my young life and had taken the place of the mother that I lost early. The principal left me for a moment to gather some flowers in the parterres of St. Denis, and, knowing well where I was going, she gave me these, and with them this letter, saying: ‘These are for an exile. When you see him give them to him, and say from me that he is not forgotten, and that these flowers of France and this letter are a witness of the homage of his fellow-countrymen who have never forgotten him.’”

Silvère here brusquely broke off the interview, for, in spite of his age, his eyes were still sharp enough to see that Prince Metternich was intently looking at them from one of the windows of the chateau, and seemed not to have missed a single detail of the scene which had just taken place.

CHAPTER III

METTERNICH

OLD Silvère acted wisely in interrupting a conversation which was becoming dangerous both to his master and his young ward.

In that vast, luxurious residence where legions of valets were coming and going all day and night, where the windows had eyes and the walls ears, he knew that he was hardly tolerated, that he was being watched every minute, for his devotion to the young prince was a matter of common knowledge. He knew well that every one in the empire—from the highest to the lowest in rank, from the Chancellor of the Empire down to the lowest scullion in the State kitchen—was his enemy. The most insignificant of his actions was likely to be misinterpreted.

He had learned by bitter experience that the slumbering hostility entertained for him needed only a specious pretext to break forth into open warfare, which would have the effect of separating him from the young master of whom he had charge, and whom he had sworn never to abandon.

Poor Silvère! What would he have thought if he had been able to accompany us into the luxurious apartment of Metternich and observe what measures that wily diplomat was taking. Metternich, after closing the window, returned to his desk, and, sitting down opposite his secretary, resumed his former occupation of tearing open the voluminous correspondence which had arrived from all the capitals of Europe.

Crouching like an immense spider in the midst of Europe's diplomatic web, loaded with riches and honors, the possessor of the Grand Croix of all the orders of Europe, His Excellency Clem-

ens Wenzel Nepomuk Lothar, Prince of Metternich-Winneburg, Minister of State and Grand Chancellor of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, saw the tranquillity of his day's and night's rest troubled every moment—the spectre of Napoleon filled him with fear and kept him always on the rack.

Yet the Emperor was dead.

Since May 5, 1821, that detested creature, whom he had cursed so often, rested in peace a thousand leagues distant from that Europe which he had dragg'd in chains, a captive, behind his triumphal car, but which he had been unable to retain in subjection.

On this particular day the chancellor was gloomier and more nervous than ever. Happening by chance—entirely by chance, of course—to be looking out of the window of his apartment, he had descried the son of that hated creature conversing with that ill-bred *groggnard*, who was perpetually turning up

in his path. The thought of that man who made kings tremble, and was nearly as powerful as God himself, always made his blood boil, and the old servitor of the young prince, with his genial, frank face, had almost an equally bad effect upon him. It was come to such a point that he—Metternich the master, whom no one attempted to gainsay—was fain almost to lower his eyes before that old soldier; and on more than one occasion he had gone out of his way in his strolls in the park to avoid meeting old Silvère face to face—the old soldier who never lowered his scarred face before any one.

And then who was this young girl conversing so confidentially with the prince, and presenting him with something, the character of which the onlooker could not discern at so great a distance? There was also a sealed package given to him; it was certainly a letter—a petition, perhaps. Could it be a petition? The appealing attitude of the young girl seemed

to indicate it. Certainly it was a communication from France. Now, in that country, he reflected, there was considerable commotion. The younger branch of the family was not yet sufficiently firmly seated on the throne provided for it by the insurrection. It was surrounded by mercenaries, and enjoyed but an indifferent popularity. It had everything to fear from a military uprising, which the remembrances and regrets of departed glories would have rendered irresistible. In such case there was everything to fear, and it was necessary to take precautions without delay.

Arousing himself from his dismal thoughts, Metternich turned toward his secretary, who was working at his elbow.

"We won't work any more to-day," he said, rising and pushing away the pile of letters spread before him; "it is a pleasant day; you may take a holiday. Try to employ it well, but be here tomorrow early to make up for lost time."

The young man rose from his desk, bowed respectfully to his chief, and left the room.

When the sound of his footsteps had died out in the distance, Metternich returned hurriedly to the table and rang his bell. A lackey was in attendance at once, and stood in front of his master awaiting his orders. Buried in his reflections, the diplomat seemed to have forgotten his presence until, chancing to raise his head, he said quickly, as if in response to the mute interrogation of the man:

“Pierre, is Count Otto de Falkenstein in the chateau? If so, hunt him up, and tell him that I desire him here, and wish him to come quickly.”

The lackey hurried off to obey the command, and, gloomier than ever, the chancellor seated himself again at his desk and resumed the task of examining the numerous documents heaped up before him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LETTER

WHEN he had left Silvère and Colette, Reichstadt returned to his apartments greatly troubled. The sight of this young girl, so tender and devoted, who had spoken to him in such a touching way of his beloved country, made his heart beat quicker, and gave birth to sentiments that, until then, he had been unfamiliar with. He gazed reverently at the bunch of violets for a long time, and then placed them gently on his desk. The sight of these flowers, withered though they were after their long journey from France, threw him into a sad reverie not unmixed with pleasurable emotions. Did they not typify his own destiny? Although he was so young he had

seen few days untroubled by clouds, and, at an age when persons of either sex have joyful hearts and smiling faces, he felt himself burdened with a weight of years almost impossible to bear.

But more important matters came to change the current of his meditations. He remembered the letter that Colette had given him, the seals of which he had not yet broken. He hastily broke it open, and hardly had he cast his eyes upon it when he carried it to his lips and give it a long, pious kiss.

He had recognized the writing of his father, the Emperor Napoleon.

Dated at Saint Helena, the letter had been written during the last few days of that remarkable man.

In the brief, concise style of a soldier, through which, however, sometimes flashed gleams of paternal feeling, the captive, too proud to complain of his fate, sketched out for his beloved son the plan of a restoration of the Empire.

With the keen insight which is the prerogative of genius, and reading the future like an open book, he reviewed, step by step, the acts, good and bad, of the dynasty which had overthrown him.

In conclusion, he urged upon his son that when the opportunity should come he would not hesitate to draw his sword and boldly claim the patrimony for the preservation of which his father had struggled until the end. Devoted friends who had never abandoned him, and in whom he had the most implicit confidence, would be able to decide as to the proper time, and would inform him of the hour and place where an appeal to arms, sanctioned by his presence, would have the best chance of success.

Then, like Saul on his way to Damascus that day when the light of the Most High appeared before his soul, the young man fell on his knees in impulsive testimony to the genius of the great man who had given him birth, and swore to

shake off that unworthy servitude to which he had been consigned, to reconquer his lost heritage, and never to sheathe his sword until that day when, coming out of Notre Dame, the crown on his head and the sceptre in his hand, he should be strong enough to avenge crimes, treasons, and insults, but noble enough to pardon them.

A pale, timid child had a moment before entered the room; there was ready to leave it a young man of steadfast mien and lofty bearing—a man prepared to throw down the gauntlet to the future and abide the consequences.

CHAPTER V.

COUNT OTTO

WHEN Fouché, Duke of Otranto, the former chief of police under Napoleon, and, after the Restoration, charged by Louis XVIII. with the same functions, had fallen into disfavor with his royal master, he felt it advisable to leave Paris. In the past he had held in his hands the threads of all the conspiracies against every government he had served since the Directory; but he thoroughly appreciated that now his public career was ended, and he wisely resigned himself to a life of obscurity in the future.

He had little difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that Austria was the best country for him to select for an asylum, and he resolved that he would end his

days in peace there, safe from the vengeance that his duplicity and odious rule had caused him to fear. Fearing that a tragic epilogue would succeed to a career soiled with crime and infamy, he turned into ready cash all the property he had acquired by serving and betraying his many masters, and went to live at Prague, hoping thus to avoid attention as much as possible.

He took with him a serving-woman, and a young man who called him "my guardian," but who, in reality, was the fruit of one of those temporary unions which he contracted during the troublous times when he was in power.

The youth grew up in the company of these two old persons; and, when the question of educating him came up, the old man placed him with the Jesuits of Friburg, where there was a college consecrated to the upbringing of youth.

Young Hopeful did great credit to his instructors. He assimilated without dif-

ficulty the various sciences that the eminent professors there were so well fitted to teach him; but, on the other hand, his lack of openness soon alienated him from the friendship and esteem of his fellow-pupils. At the death of his mysterious protector, who departed this life at Trieste in 1820, his studies were abruptly terminated, and he found himself thrown upon his own resources. Possessing but little that he could call his own (for Fouché had made no provision for him in his will), and embittered by the shipwreck of his brilliant hopes, young Otto tried everything and succeeded in nothing. Fond of pleasure and enjoyment, the slave of fiery passions that the slenderness of his means prevented him from satisfying, he gradually went down the road that leads to crime and shame.

One evening, after a drunken brawl in which he had killed the pilferer of the few florins in his possession, he was arrested

by the police, who seemingly had kept a particularly close watch over him. By some mysterious but powerful influence, he was saved from punishment. He then disappeared for several years, and no one knew what had become of him.

Then one day he returned to Vienna, cock of the walk and spending his money like water, having added, by the favor of the chancellor, to his plebeian name of Otto, the title of "Count de Falkenstein." One night Metternich, being in want of a tool, had thrown his net into the purlieus of Vienna society, and by chance had drawn up a man suited to his needs.

CHAPTER VI

NEWS FROM PARIS

THE dependent for whom the Prince de Metternich had sent would have made considerably more haste if he had been able to divine with what impatience the Chancellor of the Empire was awaiting him. Accustomed as the younger man was to the impatience of the great, he would have been extremely uneasy as to the consequences of showing little haste in complying with the orders of the minister who, like Louis le Grand, did not like to wait.

When he knocked at the door of the prince's cabinet, the latter was striding up and down the apartment, crushing in his feverish hands a letter which a cabi-

net courier had just brought to the chateau.

The news which his correspondent—the prefect of police of Paris—had given him was anything but reassuring. According to him, a Bonapartist conspiracy was on the point of breaking out, having for its object the reestablishment of the Empire and the turning upside down of the present régime. Numerous emissaries had crossed the frontier; police reports, only a few hours old, announced the disappearance simultaneously from Paris of several generals of the Empire, secret partisans of the old régime, who were, it was believed, making their way towards Vienna with the intention of seeing the prince and winning him over—kidnapping him, if necessary. The plan then was to proceed to the frontier, where, at the head of several regiments whose loyalty to the government was suspected, they would advance by forced marches on

Paris, raising the populace and the troops on the way thither.

King Louis-Philippe, continued the prefect of police, had not placed much credence at first in what he termed the lying rumors; but gradually the reports assumed such a character of consistency that a council was held in the Tuileries to arrange with the Minister of Foreign Affairs for drawing up a diplomatic note to the Chancellor of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, advising him of what was in the wind and praying him to use all his influence over the Duke of Reichstadt to dissuade him from an undertaking which threatened to revolutionize Europe, and certainly would result in the shedding of rivers of blood.

The prefect added in a postscript that a woman—or rather, a young girl—charged with a preparatory message to the son of Napoleon, preceded the generals. She was to instruct him tentatively in regard to the project and arrange a

rendezvous in the chateau, where they would agree upon all the details necessary to bring the enterprise to a successful conclusion and hand over to the young man the throne of his father.

CHAPTER VII

THE SPY

THE enigmatical—but apparently composed—demeanor of the newcomer caused the anger of the chancellor to cool suddenly. The calmness of the young man surprised him, and, expecting important revelations, he dropped in his chair, rather than seated himself.

After several minutes spent in meditation he raised his head and addressed himself to Otto:

“ You have taken your time to comply with my order to come to me. You are perhaps ignorant of the fact that I exact from my subordinates of every grade and variety an almost military promptitude. You do not seem to have acted as if you knew this requirement on my part. I

trust I shall not find it necessary to make such a reproach to you again."

"Your Excellency," returned the young man, "will not only, I believe, excuse the deliberation with which I have executed your orders, but will commend me when you have heard my report of the cause of my negligence."

"You have important information to impart, then?" said the prince, leaning toward his companion. "But, before all things, it is important to proceed in order and methodically. If you will be so good, take things in their logical order; begin at the beginning—*ab ovo*, as the ancients say—and give me a report of the manner in which you have accomplished the mission I charged you with, for it is of the greatest importance to me. First, when did you return?"

"Last night. I arrived toward ten o'clock at the chateau, and repaired to the apartments reserved for me, for at that late hour, covered with dust as I was

after my long journey and having been two days on the road, I was not very presentable. You know, Monseigneur, that etiquette is of such sovereign importance here that it would have been considered a crime for me to present myself in such a state before your Excellency. This morning, however, I was up at an early hour, waiting to be summoned, when an unexpected circumstance (the meeting with a person whose presence here I was far from suspecting) resulted in—but I am wandering from the matter in hand.”

“Very well,” said the chancellor; “collect your thoughts and relate matters in their proper sequence. What I want, first, is a complete report of your trip to Paris and the news that you acquired there. I want to know everything—good and bad. You are to conceal nothing. Go on with your story. What did you learn there?”

“Surprising things, as you will re-

mark when you have heard my story. I reached there towards noon last Monday, and immediately reported to our ambassador. He was at home, fortunately. I found him in a disquieted frame of mind and much preoccupied. He quickly, however, made me *au courant* with the news of the day, repeated to me all the rumors that were flying about, and told me of the projected plot. He apprised me of the names of the parties implicated, and said that he had put on the case all the police that he could get hold of; but that the conspirators had acted with so much prudence that they had eluded all his efforts and completely baffled his sleuths, and if it had not been that chance—the Providence of the police—had come to his assistance, he feared that he could have done nothing to head off the uprising, and would have been caught unawares and powerless to resist.

"After I had tried to console him in

a perfunctory way, I left him, resolving that I would go to work on my own hook and trust to my lucky star; and the experience I had some few hours afterwards showed me that I was right to take that course instead of yielding to despair.

“Your Excellency is sufficiently acquainted with the moral topography of Paris to know that the Palais Royal is the heart of the city. In the evening it is fast and loud, being thronged by a noisy, mixed crowd. It is the rendezvous of people from every quarter of the globe—a place where a person fond of orgies can drink his full of dissipation; where the pearl powder on the fairy’s arm is brushed off by the aristocratic frock coat of princes, dukes, and marquises engaged in having a good time in the hurly-burly of debauch.

“In the afternoon the character of the place is, of course, entirely changed. The shops are closed, the fairies are sleeping, and all around the parterres children

romp and play, and their jolly laughter gives a note of purity to the immense place that in the evening will again be a den of assignation.

"I had walked and walked and pondered deeply as to what I might better do, when suddenly, right at my elbow, I saw passing me Bertrand and Montholon, dressed in travelling costume. Hanging on Montholon's arm was a young girl, hardly twenty years of age, a brunette; and pretty enough to drive you crazy. Behind the group—at a distance of twenty paces—came a Savoyard, carrying a hand-bag.

"Here was a ray of light for me. Chance, of which the Austrian ambassador had spoken, was smiling on me. I held in my hand one of the threads of the complicated web which was puzzling so many persons.

"At the Cour des Fontaines the two generals, their pretty companion, and the Savoyard—whom I followed at a distance

as unobtrusively as possible—turned off into the rue Notre Dame des Victoires and entered the Cour des Messageries, where, after waiting a few minutes at the carriage office, they went toward the Strasbourg diligence, which was about starting, and in which three coupé places had been reserved for them in advance.

"Provided as I was with a diplomatic passport and plenty of money, it was easy for me to get aboard at the same time they did; but fearing to be recognized, I contented myself in the *rotonde*, and I was soon after bowling along toward Strasbourg, where in due time I arrived, regularly done up but triumphant. During the long journey I had had time to reflect, and, reasoning from induction, I had been able to figure out exactly their projects and plan of campaign. I was materially assisted in this by overhearing through the partition scraps of conversation from time to time. Judging from the frequent fresh and

hearty laughter of the young girl, the party were far from suspecting the terribly dangerous *compagnon de voyage* that fortune had thrown in their way.

“But there’s many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip, and the Tarpeian Rock is in the immediate neighborhood of the Capitol.

“At Strasbourg I suffered a check, which would have been my ruin had not chance—the chance that I shall always bless and invoke—repaired the fault I was guilty of.

“Your Excellency will pardon me if my story is a long one; but, without wishing to excuse myself entirely, I am quite willing to submit to your judgment both sides of the question. I will proceed with my narrative.

“I put up at the same hotel as my friends, the conspirators, whom I attended as faithfully as if I were their shadow. After my long vigil, so exhausted that I could hardly stand, I was

unfortunate enough to sleep an hour too long; and in the morning, when I sprang out of bed, fresh and fit for anything, and had dressed and descended to the *salle*, my fellow-travellers were no longer there. They had disappeared—winged their flight elsewhere. In the court a stable-boy was washing a carriage. It was the vehicle which had carried them to Kiel—they had crossed the Rhine.

“I sprang on a horse and covered the route they had taken as rapidly as possible, but saw no trace of them. I arrived here with death in my heart. This morning I went to get a breath of fresh air in the garden, and the first person I saw was my fair travelling companion, emerging leisurely from a clump of trees in the park. She was not alone; the Duke of Reichstadt was with her. They passed close to where I was hidden, and I heard my lady say in a low voice: ‘At Camaldules, the 5th of May, at midnight.’”

Metternich rose; the audience was over, but before dismissing the count he said to him harshly:

"Chance has played, as you say, a large part in this affair. You will soon have to come to me again for further instructions. Employ your spare moments in sauntering around and keeping your eyes open. Gain the duke's friendship and confidence. He is innocent and good-hearted. Your task in that respect is easy, and it is necessary for the success of my plans to perform it well. He is not acquainted with you, but I will attend to the matter of an introduction. *Bonjour*; keep your wits about you. The Tarpeian Rock that you were talking about just now is called here the Spielberg. People who go there don't come back. *Bonjour*; leave me; I desire to be alone."

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE GROVE

THE spy told the strict truth when he reported to Prince Metternich that he had surprised Reichstadt and Colette at their stolen interview; and his espionage was destined to give an unlucky turn to events.

After his meeting with Colette, the son of Napoleon began to experience the first symptoms of that delightful malady known as love. Deprived in his infancy of a mother's tenderness, and now surrounded by courtiers indifferent, if not actually hostile to him, his mind was well prepared for the germination of vague desires and thoughts that he had been hitherto unacquainted with.

Although he was resolved not to yield

to unworthy temptations, the sight of the beautiful, modest girl, and the boundless devotion and affection which she bestowed on the old servitor, had kindled in the young man's soul a spark of love, which increased in intensity day by day.

Ever since that night when, on his knees, he had sworn to claim, sword in hand, that heritage of glory bequeathed to him by his father, a complete transformation had taken place in his character. The timid, irresolute youth had given place to a young man with a firm, decided character. With a judgment that a man of mature age might well envy, he had weighed the chances of success in the adventure he was about to undertake, and then, with undaunted soul, had made his decision, and resolved to bear the consequences, whatever they were.

It was in this mood, after a sleepless night, that the young man entered the park to breathe the fresh air of a spring morning. Colette, who had just re-

turned from a hasty visit to Vienna, upon discovering Reichstadt in the park hastily made her way toward a secluded grove containing a marble seat, where she knew he spent many hours in reading and dreaming. The rapidity of her walk, and the emotion she experienced at her daring action, caused her heart to beat painfully. It was, to say the least, a rash act for her to meet the duke in such a lonely spot; but the soldier's daughter, blindly devoted to the cause she served, declined to be influenced by such petty considerations. A crisis was at hand. Two days before a beggar stationed at the park gate, in thanking her for a florin dropped into his hat, had made her a mysterious sign, for which she was doubtless prepared, as, after a brief conference with Silvère, she set out for Vienna.

There, in an interview with the two generals, her travelling companions, it was decided that she should induce the duke to consent to meet the conspirators

on the 5th of May at midnight in a monastery at Camaldules, a little off the road to Wagram. The place selected for the meeting was particularly fitted for the purpose, as the locality had been ravaged by the recent wars, and was a vast solitude where all the preparations for a coup could be made without attracting attention.

When the duke, happening to look up, saw Colette coming toward him his surprise was so great that he dropped the book which he had been reading. He quickly, however, recovered his self-possession, and advancing to meet the young girl, took her hand in a friendly manner, and begged her to rest on the marble seat.

"Tell me, my dear compatriot," he exclaimed, gayly, "to what happy circumstance I must attribute such an early meeting as this. I trust that nothing has gone amiss with you. Is Silvère ill? I saw him yesterday walking in his garden.

But what is the matter with you? Your hand trembles. Do I frighten you? Why are you so excited? Calm yourself and speak to me."

"Monseigneur," returned Colette, "when you have heard me you will be as excited as I am."

"Indeed! Is it so important? Have you received news from France? Has anything unexpected happened to upset the plans which you have formed? Has it anything to do with leaving here?"

"Yes," replied Colette, rising; "it has something to do with leaving here; but it concerns your departure—not mine."

"My departure," said the duke. "Come, explain yourself. When I saw you trembling and distracted I divined that something important was at stake, for your coming out and meeting me at this hour of the day is most unusual. You are risking at this moment the dearest possession a young girl has—her

reputation—and you are risking it in order to assist and advise a person whom you hardly know and who is nothing to you. How good you are, and how I thank you for this proof of affection you have given me! It is a thing I am little accustomed to."

"Monseigneur," said Colette, "the daughter of a soldier goes straight ahead when duty calls, without expostulation and without fear. When she sets forth she regards nothing but the end, and when that end is a worthy one she pursues her course proudly and recks not of cowards and fools. She knows how to take care of herself, for her honor is her sole capital; and child of the flag as she is, and brought up under its folds, she has constantly in mind the preservation of her modesty."

Filled with admiration and respect, the duke stood mute before the lovely maiden—the living incarnation of the lost cause. Then, raising his head, he said:

"And this departure, Colette; you have forgotten that."

"No, Monseigneur," she replied; "but before coming to that I wish to fire your soul with the same inspiration that fills my own. When I was still a child, my mother, in the winter evenings by the light of a lamp, has often read to me the history of Joan of Arc, who was sent by heaven to put the king back on his throne and drive the English into the sea. *Mon Dieu!* how I wished then I had been that heroine; that I could have borne the sword aloft and attacked and cleft in twain the enemies of France, and then, at the hour of triumph, have taken my place at the side of the king!"

"And God has heard my prayer, for, if you desire it, in two days from now we will set out. Two generals of the Empire, faithful to the recollection of your father, await us not far distant. I wish to be the first to salute the Emperor," and, suiting the action to the word,

Colette fell on her knees, and possessing herself of the hand of the duke, raised it respectfully to her lips.

Reichstadt hastily raised her to her feet; then, exhausted by the emotions she had awakened, and thinking it too late to remain longer in the grove, he took his leave—not, however, until he had asked her the hour and place for the meeting.

It was then that the spy, prowling in the garden, heard the answer:

“The 5th of May, at Camaldules.”

CHAPTER IX

AT THE BALL

THE immense windows of the Chateau de Schönbrunn are resplendent with light. The walls of the vast building and the terraces surrounding it are bathed in the pale light of a spring evening. The enchanting notes of a grand orchestra discoursing redowas and polonaises drift out upon the night air.

On the main floor, standing by his grandfather, the Emperor Francis I., is the Duke of Reichstadt. He is much sought after, and does the honors of the ball and receives the guests as they arrive.

Under the chandeliers gay couples go through the complicated figures of the dance; and uniforms of every shade, cov-

ered with gold and silver embroidery, form a fitting background to the white shoulders of the ladies and their wealth of diamonds.

Near a French window, apart from the crowd, the Prince de Metternich and Otto de Falkenstein, his tool, are conversing in a low tone; and when, at midnight, the great clock of the chateau sounds the hour for supper, and the dancers of both sexes, preceded by the Emperor with an archduchess on his arm, make their way slowly toward the immense banquet hall, the two men secretly slip out and proceed toward the right wing of the palace.

It is there, at the top, under the platform of La Gloriette, that the duke's apartments are located.

The galleries and staircases are deserted and everything seems to favor the nocturnal expedition of this prince of the Austro-Hungarian empire who, blinded by his hate and resentment, has de-

scended so low that he is attempting at night, like a burglar, to pick a lock and pry into the secrets of the grandson of the Emperor, his master.

Everything is quiet. Through the open windows comes the sound of the violins tuning up. The supper is nearly over, and the dancing will commence again and continue until daybreak.

The light flashes on a steel tool of some kind in the hands of the spy. Under his touch—which seems to be not unfamiliar with such work—the lock quickly gives way, and the contents of the chamber are visible by the pale light of a *veilleuse* which burns at the head of the bed.

Metternich, at this juncture, feels his strength abandoning him, and now that he has arrived at the consummation of his plans and has only to reach out his hand to get possession of the accursed letter which has caused him so much trouble, he trembles and hesitates.

He sinks into an arm-chair. But sud-

denly he rises and starts back as if a serpent were at his feet. On the desk, not two steps distant from him, is a bronze mask of the Emperor Napoleon, held in the talons of an enormous eagle, which apparently protects and defends it.

It is the one souvenir that the child has retained of his father. A pious servitor preserved the sacred image from oblivion. More fortunate than his master, he returned to France, and immediately sought out a great artist, and, handing over to him the plaster cast, which he had carefully retained, a chef-d'œuvre came forth, after which the mould was immediately demolished. This representation of his father the young man kept always by him, and daily and hourly it comforted him by speaking of the dead.

At the sight of the bust, the remorse for the cowardly and dishonorable action upon which he was engaged in the company of a vile spy disappeared from that

soul where there was no longer any room for aught but hate and rage.

He drew himself up to his full height; the burden of his years slipped from his shoulders, and, confronting the marvellous bronze upon which death had sealed the solemn majesty of the Beyond, he exclaimed:

“ So, then, even in this palace your detested effigy comes to trouble me! Is your grave so insecurely closed that your accursed face comes from the abyss of space to awaken bitter recollections in my soul? Your abhorred image still inspires the soul of your son. You made your calculations without remembering me. I am here still, and I am watching.”

Then, turning away from the rigid mask and repressing his burst of rage on account of the presence of his accomplice, he said to Otto, who was listening to him much troubled:

“ What we are looking for ought not

to be far from here. Lift up the bronze and look under it."

Otto did as he was told ; and the bronze mask having been lightly raised up, there on the table-cover appeared a paper sealed with the Imperial arms.

Metternich seized it and proceeded hurriedly to master its contents.

The further he advanced in his reading the deeper became his frown.

When he had finally finished its perusal, he turned to Otto and said :

" Your reports and the inferences that I have drawn from them are now fully confirmed. We are confronted by a plot of which all the tangled threads are in my hands. Have you not told me of a rendezvous that the adopted daughter of this soldier-gardener has arranged for the duke in the ruined convent off the road to Wagram, a few leagues from here? I have forgotten the date ; you will have to jog my memory."

" That's easy enough, Monseigneur,"

returned Otto; "the rendezvous is for to-morrow, the 5th of May, at midnight, and I have an excellent reason for not forgetting the date. That date was chosen for a reason; it is the day—"

"Don't finish," said Metternich; "I know. It is the anniversary of the Emperor's death. Well, if that date pleases them it suits me perfectly. I will make such preparations that they will have good cause to remember the 5th of May. But time is passing. Let us get out of here before any one sees us."

When the two men had left the room, and their retreating footsteps could be heard no longer, a frightened face emerged from a corner of the apartment covered by a thick drapery, and Colette stood revealed by the rays of the rising sun.

CHAPTER X

COLETTE

A FEW words will be necessary to explain the presence of the young girl in the duke's apartments at such an hour. She was the daughter of a soldier, and had nothing of the timidity of the young girls of the present day. Again, the short time remaining before the blow was to be struck did not permit her to stand upon too much ceremony ; the preparations for taking away the duke were all made ; the day of departure was fixed, and it was no longer possible to take a backward step.

Reichstadt, carried away by the enthusiasm of Colette, had no objection to carrying out his rôle ; but, too much excited to remain longer in the park, he had

left the young girl without giving her a chance to explain the details of the plan in which he was to take part.

It was to repair this omission that Colette, provided with instructions for the duke, introduced herself into his apartments, and was thus unwittingly present and saw the dishonorable act of Metternich and his accomplice.

When she heard the last part of the conversation between the two, and comprehended that she and her friends were at the mercy of the spy, and that everything would have to be begun over again, a cold perspiration trickled down her forehead and she had to seize hold of the hangings behind her to keep from falling.

But how had she been able to get access to the room when the door was so securely locked that Metternich had to force it open? This can be easily explained.

When the Emperor—the conqueror of

the Austrians—fixed his residence at Schönbrunn in the short interval between two victories, he occupied the same apartment which, some years later, was to be the study of his proscribed son. As his staff was coming constantly to his rooms, the Emperor, who was fond of being alone, was accustomed to put away etiquette and descend to the park to inhale the night air and banish from his mind for a brief season the cares of power. He soon found it convenient for his purposes to have a secret entrance to his apartment. Silvère, whom the Emperor had attached to his person and from whom he concealed nothing, was the only one aware of the existence of this secret passage. When, therefore, Colette, after her return to the cottage at the conclusion of her conversation with Reichstadt, had told her adopted father that she had not thoroughly finished her mission, Silvère did not hesitate to confide to her the secret of the hidden passageway, and the

girl took advantage of the night of the ball to place the letter of the confederates where the young man could see it on his return. The presence of Metternich and his ally changed her plans. Calm and resolute, and taking counsel of no one but herself, she replaced in her bosom the letter she had taken out; then, approaching the table and taking up a pen lying on a silver writing-desk, she wrote as follows, with a feverish hand, on a slip of paper:

"MONSIEUR :

"Be there to-morrow, the 5th of May, at 10 o'clock instead of at midnight.

"At the ruined monastery of Camaldules.

"Your highness must be attended by some one ; let it be the Count of Falkenstein.

"COLETTE."

Then she tilted up the bronze cast, placed her note where it might be seen, and, conjecturing by the noise of carriage wheels that the guests were leaving and

the duke would soon return, she raised up the hangings and departed, saying to herself: "I shall have two hours to spare. Two hours! God is just."

CHAPTER XI

CAMALDULES

AT a league's distance from Schönbrunn, in a well-wooded valley separated from the road leading to Wagram by hills of considerable height, is located the monastery of Camaldules. The building was erected in the early part of the twelfth century under the auspices of St. Romualdo, and had beheld many revolutions and wars. The fact that it was at some distance from the highway had been its salvation—the hordes of troops which had, in the course of half-a-dozen centuries, succeeded each other passed close by its walls without being aware of its existence.

Thus protected by nature, the monastery was the scene of the usual monkish

activity until the time of the Imperial wars, when, on account of the scarcity of labor, the monks were obliged to leave the locality.

The building so abandoned gradually went to ruin in the course of time; the bells no longer rang out, the organ was mute, and tufts of moss made their appearance in the neglected cells.

But the ruin was not entirely deserted.

One of those pious cenobites—almost a centenarian—following the example of his order, which had numerous hermits scattered about all over Christendom, besought permission of his superiors to spend the few remaining years of his life in the cloister where he had passed the most of his existence. He represented to them that that solitary valley was the only world he knew, and that he wished to pass his remaining days in contemplation and prayer.

His request was granted.

The pious creature had always been a

student of simples, and became quite proficient in the art of curing by vegetable remedies. So true was this that he soon had a numerous clientèle among the poor and ailing.

Silvère, who was of an age when he began to experience severe twinges as the result of the many hard knocks he had received in his campaigns, had heard some one speak of the monk-physician, and made him a visit and receiyed much benefit from the treatment.

Since then the monk and the soldier saw each other almost every day. Although devoted to pursuits so widely differing from each other, there grew up between the two lonely old men a most sincere friendship. On pleasant days the old soldier, seated on the shaft of a broken column, might be heard declaiming whole epics bearing upon his vast experience at the forefront of battle; the monk, seated at his side, would sometimes take the floor and talk to his friend

of God and the saints. Each had his hobby.

When night came they bade each other good-by; the soldier returned to the chateau and the hermit retired within and stretched his lean figure on a mat made of rushes, which, with a rough bench, comprised the furniture of his narrow cell.

As a result of these many visits, Silvère became well acquainted with the interior of the building—even with its most secret recesses.

One Christmas Eve, the snow, which had been falling for several days, had made the roads almost impassable, and the hermit insisted that his friend should pass the night in the monastery. Silvère allowed himself to be persuaded to do so, though he would have much preferred his own bed to the hard couch destined for him. He retired early and tried his best to sleep. The pealing of the bells of Vienna calling the faithful to midnight

mass reached him, slightly muffled by the hills surrounding the valley. Unable to sleep, he was turning and twisting on his bed when the door of his cell opened, and, by the light of a torch, he perceived the monk standing in the doorway and beckoning to him to follow. Silvère arose at once, and, climbing over the rubbish that strewed the yard, the two men entered the chapel.

Arrived there, the monk, by means of a crowbar lying under the steps of the altar, forced back an enormous stone, which worked in grooves and was so nicely fitted to them that a child could manage it. An icy breeze, impregnated with the sickening fumes of decaying matter, assailed their nostrils, and they instinctively recoiled.

The monk was the first to recover himself. Followed by his companion, he advanced toward the opening. By means of a short, shaky ladder both descended to a subterranean chapel, the walls of

which consisted of the rarest varieties of marble. Between the choir and the apse was an altar covered with the vestments and utensils that are brought into requisition when masses for the dead are celebrated. There was also a crucifix covered with crape, a number of tapers of yellow wax, and several candlesticks. On the further side of the choir, placed on oaken brackets, their faces covered by their cowls, lay five score monks, seeming to await the signal of the Abbé to rise and sing the hours.

Silvère regarded this strange scene with astonishment; but the odor of decomposing flesh rendered a stay of any duration in the chapel dangerous in the highest degree. Even the monk recognized this when he saw that the light of his torch had assumed a pale, sickly color. Seizing the soldier by the arm, he dragged him with little ceremony to the foot of the ladder, and both remounted to the floor above.

When they arrived in the sacred edifice overhead, the monk moved the stone back into its former position and replaced the crowbar under the altar steps. Then, turning to Silvère, and breaking the silence which he had maintained till then, he said :

“ Friend and brother, when I urged your remaining with me this night, you probably suspected that I did it for no frivolous reason. The time is come for me to explain myself. You are courageous and will be faithful to an oath. Will you, by the crucifix before us, promise me that when I die you will take me in your arms and place me in the empty cell on the right of the choir? I have abided here all these years solely that I might be placed to rest there when life was over. I am waiting to hear your answer.”

Silvère, deeply touched by the trust that the hermit had placed in him, and moved, beside, by the attachment the old

man displayed for his old residence, readily gave his promise; and when, not long after, the hermit slept his last sleep, he was placed religiously by the side of his former comrades.

This digression will explain why Silvère knew the monastery so well.

We shall see hereafter what part the subterranean chapel played in the drama that was taking place.

CHAPTER XII

A LESSON

THE Prince de Metternich, when he had brusquely dismissed the spy, after receiving his report, proceeded to block out the best course of action to pursue. He arranged that the spy should be presented forthwith to the Duke de Reichstadt, and instructed the former to endeavor to gain the duke's good graces, to watch all his actions, and to be especially careful to give warning of the time when the conspiracy would come to a head.

Otto had little difficulty in carrying out the first part of his instructions. The duke, who was by nature very approachable, received kindly the advances of the

spy, and soon admitted him to the number of his intimate friends.

The psuedo count, however, while serving the ends of his despotic master, had other projects in view. The beauty of Colette had made a deep impression upon this corrupt creature, and he thought that through his intimacy with the duke he would be able to see her frequently and put into execution the plan of seduction he had sketched out.

But one might have thought that Colette was invisible. She was always either in Silvère's cottage or in the enclosed garden where the old soldier tended his roses.

To accost her when she was walking in the garden was not to be thought of; the presence of the servants rendered such a step impracticable. And then Silvère was so watchful! He never left his adopted child alone. At an appeal from her he would quickly have hastened to her assistance. But suppose he should

see an opportunity to waylay the young girl, how should he explain his presence in that part of the park to the old soldier, who would have visited with prompt justice any affront?

Fate came to his assistance.

One evening Colette, wearying of her voluntary seclusion, resolved to take a long walk in the park. It happened to be the evening of the fête described in the preceding chapter.

Not knowing what the morrow had in store for her, she wished to take another look at the little grove where one spring morning she had offered her devotion to the exile and excited his admiration to such a high degree.

Colette's feeling, however, was not only devotion in the ordinary sense of the word. A sentiment of a more tender nature had taken possession of her heart. The gentle pity that every woman feels for the unfortunate had been replaced by a new sensation, painful and

yet pleasant. She had experienced a wound which brought to her heart for the first time a sentiment of joy and yet of fear.

Seated on the marble bench the young girl, absorbed in her reflections, seemed completely detached from the affairs of this world—as if her soul had taken wing for a better land and had left behind all the deceptions and miseries of earth.

A shadow, which intercepted the last rays of the setting sun, caused her to raise her head.

In front of her, his arms folded on his breast, stood the same stranger whom she had run across when she took leave of the duke the day she told him of the place of rendezvous. She recognized in him also the persistent creature who, at every hour of the day recently, had been hanging around Silvère's cottage.

At the same time something impelled her to give a rapid glance into the past. Where had she seen this mysterious man

before? She passed rapidly in review the events of the last few months, and suddenly hit upon the answer to the riddle. It was the same traveller who, in the Cour des Messageries, was so inquisitive about her companions that they believed themselves watched, and thought it best to leave Strasbourg at the earliest opportunity and cross the Rhine.

These diverse recollections caused a feeling of the most absolute repulsion in the young girl's soul against the creature, and her features—ordinarily so gentle and open—became clouded. In a word, her whole face was a plain indication of the storm which was raging in her heart.

The young man perceived without difficulty that he was meeting with no very flattering reception, but he thought a bold stroke might turn the scales in his favor. He advanced, therefore, still closer, and said in a lackadaisical manner:

“It’s just the evening, Mademoiselle, isn’t it, to be alone and dream of love?

What an appropriate place! See how the trees surround and protect you from the gaze of curious persons. But, without wishing to be too free, may I sit down by you a moment—that is, unless you are expecting some one?"

Colette with an effort controlled herself, and, looking at the ruffian haughtily, made a movement to rise and give up her place to him. But that was not what the intruder wished, and he said hastily:

" You are not afraid of me, are you? "

Colette, who had started to go, stopped quickly. She remembered how a few days before another young man was in the same place standing by her side, and that seeing her agitation he had asked with kindness—almost with tenderness—the cause of her trouble. His voice was gentle and caressing. The emotion of anger that she was experiencing now was genuine; this young man had made almost the same remark, but what a dif-

ference there was in the way of expressing it.

The crafty wretch sitting before her on the bench with his mouth screwed up and his legs crossed deserved a lesson, and she was the woman to give it to him.

"Pardon me," she said; "you asked me if I am afraid of you. Fear is a feeling I am not acquainted with, for, until this moment, no person—male or female—has insulted me. Hereafter I shall know what fear is. I have suffered an affront, and one single sentiment fills my heart—a profound contempt. But before leaving this grove, which, according to you, is such a favorable place to dream of love, I would like to ask you who you are and by what right you are always dogging my steps. I am not aware that I have done anything to encourage your amorous pursuit. You will do well not to repeat the offence in the future.

"Now, as to who you are. You carry a sword. It sparkles in the sun—an em-

blem of honor. You are a gentleman, then. But your conduct prompts me to doubt it. What are you, then? Are you, perchance, a spy? Monsieur, your very humble servant."

And, disdainful and haughty, she passed in front of his Excellency the Count Otto de Falkenstein, and departed from the grove.

CHAPTER XIII

A LAST INTERVIEW

AT ten o'clock on the morning of the 5th of May Metternich summoned the Count Otto to his cabinet for the purpose of making the final arrangements to thwart the plot, which was to reach its culmination that evening.

The spy responded promptly to the command, and, for the first time, the diplomat dispensed with some of the haughty disdain with which he had hitherto treated his subordinate.

“Eh bien!” he said, rubbing his hands; “to-night is the night we are to put an end forever to the hopes of these idiots who want to give us a second edition of the Empire—a revised and corrected edition. Well, it is about time;

for I see that the wings of that Eaglet which Europe put under my care are beginning to grow a little too rapidly.

"Apropos of that, I sent for you so we may know exactly where we are. Do you know anything new?"

"Monseigneur," replied Otto, "I believe I have been successful beyond your most sanguine hopes, and I bring you some news which will show that I have followed your instructions to the letter. After having been presented to the Duke of Reichstadt, through the kind offices of your Excellency, I succeeded in gaining his confidence and winning his friendship. I acquitted myself so well that this morning he sent for me to come to his rooms; and, after begging me to be discreet, made me promise to accompany him this evening at nightfall on a journey. You see, I am now in the plot myself. What do you think of that, sir?"

"I am satisfied with you," replied the chancellor. "You have played a dif-

ficult rôle, and you have played it well. I must confess that from the very first you have divined just the things it was necessary for us to know. Although acting but as an obscure agent, you have left diplomats of experience far behind. You have gone straight ahead, while they were groping blindly about hoping that Providence would help them to solve the problems too hard for their powers. When the cells of Spielberg shall have been closed upon these accursed French devils, and matters are perfectly tranquil again, and when our Imperial ward, disgusted with conspiracies, recognizes that the Empire is a thing of the past, I will make it a point to recompense you royally. But, before terminating this interview, if you have any favor to ask, do not hesitate to do so. I am ready to act upon it."

"Monseigneur," replied Otto, "the praise you have given me is a sufficient recompense for my modest services, and

the request I am going to prefer will be a new proof of my devotion.

"At the park gate, in the cottage where the chief gardener lives, you have an enemy. Your Excellency was speaking of two cells in Spielberg for the French generals. Let a third one open its door to receive that man forever."

"Who?" asked Metternich.

"Silvère," replied the spy.

And he went out, gloating over the vengeance he had taken; for, with the old soldier once in prison, it would not be long before the ward would fall into the clutches of the person whom she had so mortally offended.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ROAD TO THE THRONE

IT was nine o'clock in the evening, and the moon had just risen. Its cold, pale rays lighted up the solitary valley, and the ruins of the old abbey seemed to sleep buried under its mantle of moss.

In the pass which gave an entrance to the place two men on horseback were pursuing their way. Riding side by side, they maintained a complete silence, and both seemed absorbed in the deepest meditation. These two men were the Duke of Reichstadt and Otto de Falkenstein.

The spy felt that this was the decisive hour; in a few minutes he was going to play his trump card. He knew that up to the present time Chance had been a

serviceable partner and had helped to take in many a trick. Like all gamblers, however, he was fearful lest something unexpected should happen at the last moment to spoil his play. He thought, too, of the promises of Metternich and of the recompense which he had every right to expect; but his knowledge of men, and his contempt for most of them, made him uncertain and nervous. After all, what faith could he place in the chancellor? The disdain that the latter had never taken the trouble to conceal; his sudden caprices; the deep aversion that he plainly perceived sometimes underlying the icy politeness—all these things depressed him at the moment when he felt he was attaining his end—when he was reaching forth his hand to gather the fruit of so much labor.

A thought even more bitter left him no rest; he was but a spy—one of those despicable instruments of whom the great make use, but whom they throw over

without compunction when they find it to their interest to do so. The further he rode the more uneasy he became.

What he feared above all things was his complicity in the shameful forcing of the duke's apartments. He had been a witness to the fact that the Chancellor of Austria, a Prince of the Holy Empire, had been guilty of acting as a spy. He recalled how by the light of the *veilleuse* he had looked for one instant into the soul of the terrible chancellor, and what a frightful sight he had seen.

Reichstadt, on the other hand, rode on, his head held high, inhaling the balmy evening air with deep-drawn breaths. His thoughts were of an entirely different nature. The blessed moment he had so long expected was about to arrive. He was going to cast off forever the Austrian uniform—that slave's livery. When he placed his foot in the stirrup, on setting out from the gilded cage where he had passed his melancholy youth, he had

thrown into his last adieu all the hatred so long stored up in his heart.

And on the morrow, that day so long desired, the son of the Eagle, with wings widespread, would soar swiftly to the scene of battles. His heart was fired as by a bugle blast; and before him he saw great plains covered with soldiery. With drums beating and standards flung to the breeze he saw the opposing masses under the broiling sun advance to the furious charge; he saw the steel flash in the sun's rays and heard the hollow booming of the cannon in the distance.

As if in a dream, insensible to his surroundings, the son of Napoleon went his way on the road whither his destiny led him.

A strong hand on his bridle rein recalled him to earth, and he saw Silvère by his side.

He had reached his destination.

CHAPTER XV

THE PUNISHMENT

THE new arrivals, preceded by Silvère, entered the chapel, which was lighted feebly by several lamps.

Near the ruined steps formerly used for reaching the altar stood two cloaked figures.

Upon the entrance of the duke they hurriedly uncovered, and the young man perceived two manly, soldierly forms. They smiled with pleasure at seeing him, but that look was quickly changed when they saw by whom he was accompanied.

Reichstadt, perceiving the unfavorable impression made by his companion, hastened to reassure them.

“ Gentlemen,” said he, “ do not believe, I beg of you, that in a matter so grave I

would act thoughtlessly. I know very well that the least indiscretion now might entail the most serious results. It might be a matter of death for you and of perpetual imprisonment for me. But fear nothing ; the man with me, I assure you, came here at my request, and if it seems like forgetting the elementary principles of prudence to bring a stranger, I can only say in my defence that I did it because I was expressly so instructed to do by a young girl whose devotion to our cause is unquestionable. I speak of the adopted daughter of my old servitor Silvère."

At the name of Colette, and learning that she was the cause of his being there, the spy felt a cold shiver run down his back. Why, he thought, should this young girl, who could not possibly have any feeling for him except one of contempt, who the evening before had ridiculed him so cruelly—why should she bring him into the midst of a plot which,

thanks to him, was going to end in nothing? Here was a mystery that he could not fathom; but he was not the man to give up easily, and he postponed a further consideration of the subject.

The duke, fearful that the explanation of his conduct which he had given would be coldly received, and beginning to think that he had been a little careless in treating as a friend a man who had given no proof that he deserved confidence, did not observe the consternation of his companion.

Leaving the spy in the company of Silvère, the duke retired to a corner of the chapel for a conference with the conspirators.

Finally the conference was ended. Everything appeared to be arranged. Silvère had just lighted a torch, in order to guide the party out, when a person whom nobody expected made her appearance.

It was Colette.

What was the meaning of her appearance at such an hour? Did she come to bid the duke a last farewell or did she intend to join her fortune with his?

Such were the questions that occurred to those present.

Their suspense did not last long.

Pale and resolute, she turned to the generals, who were looking at her with stupefaction, and said:

"Gentlemen, I come to fulfil a sad duty. The devotion that you entertain for the memory of your Emperor has caused you to engage in a project worthy of your courage and energy. Faithful to your word given at the Emperor's deathbed, you have done everything during the last few years to restore to the son the throne lost by the father. You have risked your heads and pushed valor to the extreme of rashness by coming so close to Schönbrunn, the aerie of the house of Austria, to bear away the Eaglet who has so long been held in captivity."

"But, soldiers ignorant of devious ways, lions who fight in the open, your brave efforts are to fall to the ground through the duplicity and underhand workings of those whose interest it is to render them nugatory. Your noble enterprise, upon the point of succeeding, must be begun again. Your plans are known; and within an hour an army with drawn swords and muskets prepared for action will descend upon this valley, for they have sworn to take you and make you pay for the terror caused by the fear of a Restoration. Silvère, who knows all the ins and outs of this place, will be able to get you safe and sound out of this abbey, where your enemies expected to find and shoot you.

"An asylum awaits you, where you will remain until the storm blows over. The frontier is guarded. Your task is finished and mine now begins."

Then, turning toward Otto, who was

by this time in a cold perspiration, she said :

“ Arrest this man. We have still an hour ; it will be sufficient for revenge.”

Silvère led him aside and bound his hands.

The duke, with his hands to his head, dropped upon an oak bench, and the generals impassively waited for the young girl to speak again.

“ You recall, gentlemen,” continued Colette, “ our departure from Paris, the rapid trip we made to Strasbourg, and the ingenious trick by which we succeeded in outwitting the watchfulness of the man who was shadowing us? Well, a few days after my arrival I had an interview with Monseigneur the Duke, in which I made him acquainted with our plans. When I was leaving him, and just as I had announced to him the place and time of the rendezvous, what was my surprise to see hanging around, and seeming to spy upon us, the very

same creature that followed us to Strasbourg.

“‘Who was he, and what was he doing at the chateau?’ That was what I asked myself, and, as you will see, I received a very conclusive answer in the sequel.

“I was destined to meet him twice more.

“Of my first meeting with him I will say little, for it is a matter personal to myself, and the insult I received from him is a trifling matter compared with the interests which we all have at stake. I will, then, speak only of the second of these meetings.

“It was during the fête given last night. Taking advantage of the servants being engaged elsewhere, about the middle of the evening I sought the apartments of the duke, whom I had seen occupied in receiving his guests. It was necessary for me to give him the letter that we had obtained in Vienna a few days before. I entered his room by a

secret passage which Silvère had shown to me, and approaching the cabinet where he kept his papers, I was about to place my letter where he could see it, when the sound of some one trying to force open a door attracted my attention and obliged me to conceal myself—not, however, till I had repossessed myself of my letter.

“I held my breath, and, although fearing nothing for myself, I could not help trembling.

“Judge of my surprise when, the lock giving away, I saw by the pale light of the *veilleuse* the Prince of Metternich and this creature. Their presence in that part of the chateau puzzled me in no little degree, but at the first words they uttered I shuddered and feared that I should swoon. I exerted all my self-control, however, resolving to hear to the end the sinister verdict which would put an end to all our hopes. Then it was that I learned that this cursed spy tracked us step by step all the time since our depart-

ure from Paris. Disconcerted for a moment by our abrupt flight at Strasbourg, he had soon regained his courage, and fortune smiled upon him here and threw me in his way.

“Being curious to know the cause of my being in Schönbrunn, he came up close to the duke and me and overheard our secret; and lost no time in acquainting his master with the facts.

“All this time I was hidden behind the hangings, powerless to act and hardly able to suppress my sobs—from time to time fancying myself the victim of a nightmare. When at daybreak the two men took their departure, I had made my resolutions. I had sat in judgment on the spy, condemned him, and set a trap to catch him. Blinded by his success hitherto he has, as you see, rushed headlong into it.

“That is my report. But if we have lost the throne we can still have vengeance.”

The duke, who all this time had lis-

tened to Colette without making a movement which could reveal his thoughts, rose from his seat and, turning to Otto, said :

“ You have heard this girl’s statement. It is a grave charge indeed, and I believe that it is useless to dwell more upon it. But I have something to say to you on my own account.

“ Under the auspices of the Emperor, my grandfather, you have betrayed my confidence. In order to compromise me more thoroughly you have pried into my most secret thoughts and aspirations. You have done worse than that. I was ignorant of perfidy, and you have caused me to lose my faith in human nature by showing me the hollowness of friendship. A shameful act for a nobleman—for one who wears a sword.”

Silvère, hearing these words, emerged from the shadow and exclaimed :

“ He noble! Not a bit of it, Monseigneur. Listen.

"The other evening after sunset I was strolling in my garden, when I heard several persons talking on the other side of the wall. I am not very curious as a rule, but I heard a name uttered that immediately made me all attention. They were speaking of this gentleman.

"Well, I heard—fine things, certainly. Two stable boys, thinking they were not overheard, were speaking their minds very freely. They criticised their respective masters in turn, and when it came to this fellow's turn to receive a character, this is what they said: That the noble was no noble, the count no count; that the sword he carried was like his nobility—a lie. They said that he was a blackleg pardoned from jail one evening when there was a demand for spies."

And turning to Otto, who in a fury of rage was vainly trying to burst his thongs, he added:

"What do you think about it, Monsieur le Comte?"

In response to this thrust, the player who had lost the game on which his life was at stake stepped toward his judges.

But the duke rose again, and, addressing himself to the generals, said :

“ Do you think that death will be sufficient punishment for this man ? ”

The two generals bowed in the affirmative.

Colette thereupon mounted the steps of the altar, removed her black veil, and wrapped it like a winding sheet about the immense bronze crucifix. When she had come down to the floor again, Silvère, turning to the duke, said :

“ Monseigneur, if it is your will, I believe that we shall be able to put away from the sight of men this worthless creature without soiling our hands with his blood. Below this edifice there is a crypt extending to a great depth. The monks who formerly inhabited the building, following a custom which obtains in certain religious houses in Spain and

Italy, instead of burying their dead placed them in the stalls of the subterranean chapel. That place is devoted strictly to the dead, and nothing can come there to trouble the frightful stillness.

"I am the only person now living who knows of the existence of this crypt, and my knowledge is going to be of excellent use to us."

The old soldier then stooped down and brought forth from beneath the altar steps the crowbar, and, by a slight pressure, caused the stone slab to slide into the grooves as the old monk had taught him to do. The slab rocked unsteadily, and a yawning cavity met the gaze of those present.

Then, picking up a stout cord, he passed it under the armpits of the spy.

The latter, who knew his last hour had come, was terribly pale, but uttered no word.

The duke, addressing him then for the last time, said :

" If you have any last request to make, or if you wish to pray, now is the time, for I regret to say we need every moment."

Otto merely shrugged his shoulders.

One of the generals, raising his hand, made a signal, and Otto disappeared in the abyss, and the stone resumed its place forever.

It was time. In the distance could be heard the sound of troops. Silvère had only time to strain Colette to his breast and press the duke's hand; then, catching up a torch which he had lighted at the swinging lamp, he disappeared within the secret passage, followed by the generals.

A few minutes afterwards Metternich and several officers entered the chapel. To their great surprise, they found no one there except the duke and Colette, who were sitting on a rickety oak bench, engaged in a conversation so engrossing to them that they did not cease even when the chancellor advanced and plied them with questions.

CHAPTER XVI

LOVE

THE conversation of the young couple was not, as might be supposed, a ruse to baffle suspicion. The minds of Reichstadt and Colette were too lofty to make use of such a subterfuge.

The young girl, who had seen her beloved project fail, instead of yielding to despair, banished all remembrance of self, and thought only of consoling the young man sitting by her.

The duke, whom she had fondly hoped to call the king—the emperor—and whom she loved, had lost everything. He had lost even hope. He was like another Icarus deprived of his wings, and destined to return to slavery; she felt that she was the only thing left to him in the

world ; and she swore that she would take possession of his soul and heal his wounds. She would spend her life in consoling and making him happy.

This resolution being taken, she accepted the duke's arm and walked past the group of officers who had fondly expected to capture the conspirators. A few minutes after, the young couple had left the monastery, where lay buried forever the project which, if carried out, would have overturned the world.

The moon had nearly reached the horizon and the valley was in darkness. In this solitude, perfumed by a host of flowers offering themselves to the caresses of the night, the young couple wandered as if in a dream. No words passed between them, but their hearts were singing. The duke, with his arm around the young girl, kept her from falling on the mossy carpet. A tree blown across the road offered them a seat, and eye to eye, lip to lip, they sat down trembling.

They said nothing; their overcharged hearts beat violently, and they understood each other without words.

The duke was the first to recover himself.

"So," he said, "my dream is over. Fortune has declared herself my enemy. A few hours and I must put on the yoke again that I hoped I had cast aside forever. Dear father, if you could see me, how grieved you would be! The throne that you meant me to have another will possess, and, sad and disinherited, I will drag through my unhappy days a humiliated slave bound to the chariot of the conqueror. Until now I have been buoyed up by hope and have been able to endure the despicable present, but there is no to-morrow for me now. Destiny—cruel, pitiless—does not allow me to think of the future. My heart is dead. It seems as if my blood were turned to ice. My arm, strong for almost super-

human tasks, is paralyzed and dead. I can hardly hold the sword which I wear by the irony of fate. It is only a dress sword, and is fastened tight in the scabbard. My grief is so great that I am afraid to weep."

And he laid his head on Colette's bosom and sobbed as if his heart would break.

The young girl took his head in her two hands and kissed him reverently, as a mother might.

"Dear one," she said, "your sorrow cuts me to the soul; your tears are pitiful to see. I would give my own heart's blood if I could stop them falling. Your throne is lost, but Colette remains—Colette, who will love you till you forget everything.

"And some day, consoled, you will look back to this night and will scout the idea that a purple ribbon is worth weeping for.

"I will be your mother, your darling

sister. A devoted mistress, I will make in your soul a nest for me—me only.

“ In the warm summer days we will go to beautiful Italy and will spend happy days without care and without sadness. When the winter comes we shall hear the boatmen sing on the bay of Naples.

“ Thus shall we grow old together ; and when our heads are crowned with snow we will go to God and continue there for evermore our dream of love.”

The duke listened, smiling, to the charming voice of the siren, till the birds, welcoming the sun, taught them it was time to part.

CHAPTER XVII

SILVÈRE

R EICHSTADT and Colette had returned to the chateau as if nothing had happened, and taken up their usual mode of life ; but Metternich acted differently. The chancellor, after his check, entered the palace in a state of irritation difficult to imagine. He could not keep out of his thoughts the scene in that devilish monastery where, surrounded by his officers, he had been forced to confess that he was foiled, and to accept the explanations of Reichstadt with studied politeness. He had been duped by two children. He, who had for years played such an important rôle on the European checkerboard, had been successfully tricked like a coun-

tryman in a play. Just as he was going to bag his game it had disappeared. And then that spy, puffed up with vanity and already bargaining for a reward, must make a pitiable failure. He, Metternich, usually so distrustful, and knowing that every good quality has its compensating vice, and that a trifling slip can shipwreck the most carefully prepared plans, had given *carte blanche* to this young man.

What had become of the fellow, anyway? Doubtless he had feared to be punished for his stupidity, and had left the country and gone to play the same rôle in a new scene.

It was a serious blow to the chancellor. He was a proud man, before whom every one was accustomed to give way.

Then what should he do with the duke, a worthy son of his father, whom he had left free to come and go in the vast domain of Schönbrunn, shutting his eyes to his desires for independence, although he had never ceased his surveillance over

him? How much better it would have been if he had been put in a cell in the Spielberg instead of being given this residence, open to all comers; and he thought of the part played in history by the Tower of London and the prisons of Venice. To confine the young man was not to be thought of. Europe, which was breathing again and enjoying the benefits of a peace that it had been so long a stranger to, would not hear of a restoration which would upset all that; but, on the other hand, it would have demanded a rigid account for innocent blood spilled. He would think over it.

In the meantime he could vent his ill-humor on some one; and he sent for Silvère.

The old soldier, after putting his companions in a safe place, hastened to his cottage, resolved to brave the storm if necessary.

When he received the message to attend the chancellor he obeyed without

fear, knowing that his conscience was clear.

On seeing him enter, the chancellor, who was striding up and down the room, a prey to a rage all the greater for having been restrained so long, folded his arms and, giving him a look that would have made any one else quail, said sharply:

“ You probably wonder why I sent for you so promptly.”

Silvère, without losing aught of his calmness, replied :

“ If your Excellency has any charge to make against me, I am ready to listen respectfully. As an accused person, however, I shall reserve the right to call to your attention anything that would count in my favor.”

“ You talk too much, Mr. Soldier,” exclaimed the prince, violently. “ You have been tolerated here too long, and to-morrow you can take yourself off.”

“ You will send me off——”

“ That is the idea exactly,” returned

Metternich ; “ and my only regret is that you were ever permitted to enter the chateau. If the Emperor, my august master, had taken the wise advice that I continually gave him, you would have gone long ago. But His Majesty, fearing to displease his grandson, did not see the necessity of adopting that measure. It is now absolutely necessary that you leave ; and I am going to the Emperor at once ; and I think I shall have little trouble in inducing him to consent to your expulsion.”

“ Oh, Monseigneur,” exclaimed Silvère, “ do not do that. You will kill my young master if you take away from him the poor old servant who has never abandoned him. It would be my death-blow, too. I could not live if I were separated from him. If you drive me away it is because you know I am a sentinel who is watching you, and am able to divine your sinister intentions.

“ Let me tell you something :

"I was born a waif; I have never known what it is to be petted or caressed. I have never received a parent's kiss. I was brought up by charity, and I never got enough food to satisfy my gnawing hunger. Many is the time I have gone out at nightfall and fought with prowling dogs for a scrap of food cast away in the gutter. I was never named, but I have always been known as Silvère. Many a time I have blushed to think what a sad fate was mine.

"In time I became a soldier, and, forgetting my troubles, I did my duty at the front; my wounds will bear me out in that.

"One day, after a battle, the Emperor called me out of the ranks, shook me by the hand, and gave me a badge of honor. From that moment I became a different creature. I began gradually to acquire self-respect; and I swore that I would die for him. Fate, however, wished it otherwise; but, when I lost the father, I had still

the son. I have taken my oath never to leave him, and no one can make me break it.

"That is all I have to say to you. May I go?"

Metternich made a sign in the affirmative, and Silvère left the room.

Had he gained his cause?

CHAPTER XVIII

WITH THE EMPEROR

THE head of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, His Majesty the Emperor Francis I., had just returned from hearing mass in his private chapel; and, according to custom, was about to take his daily walk in that portion of the park reserved for his use, when, to his great surprise, it was announced that the chancellor wished to see him on a matter of urgent importance.

Much puzzled at the request at so early an hour, and suspecting that some matter of grave importance was involved, the Emperor ordered that he be admitted at once. The chancellor was within the apartment almost as soon as the message was received. He still bore traces of the

violent anger to which he had yielded—traces which did not escape the keen glance of the Emperor.

It will facilitate comprehension of Metternich's action to go back a little.

After Silvère's departure, he sank into one of those deep reveries from which he customarily awoke prepared to combat and overcome the difficulties in his way. He had listened coldly to the expostulations of the old soldier. His self-contained nature had not been at all moved by the pleadings of the servitor. In his long career he had brushed aside and disregarded those sentiments which make up so large a part of the life of humanity. Sentiment, to him, was nothing unless he could use it for his own purpose. Love, hate, gratitude, friendship, were merely varieties of tomfoolery. He treated them as if they were strands in a skein of wool. He tangled the skein or disentangled it—just as his interest demanded.

Now he reflected: There is love; why not make use of that human weakness? The duke was in love, and there could be little doubt that the object of his passion was the adopted child. Spurred on by this sentiment, he might be able to burst asunder the invisible shackles with which he had been so ably held in check. If he, Metternich, should oust Silvère and forbid Colette access to the chateau, he would arouse the anger of the duke, who might adopt some of those desperate measures that people take when crossed in their love affairs. What would be the good of turning them away when there was an easier course to pursue? Was there not at his beck and call an exquisite creature, just made for love, whose beauty could not fail to produce its effect on the duke? She had all the qualities necessary for his purpose. She was trustworthy; she was discreet, and she was capable of easily comprehending what was required of her.

But, in order to procure her access to the chateau, and throw her in Reichstadt's way, it was essential that she be attached to the service of the archduchess; and to accomplish that, the consent of the Emperor must be obtained.

The Emperor opened the conversation.

"Your Excellency must have had some very important matter to communicate when you asked me to receive you without being summoned. Does a danger threaten the monarchy? Is there some new combination which augurs ill to the peace which we are now enjoying, and for which we paid so dear?"

"Sire," replied Metternich, "Your Majesty is not unaware of the difficulties I have had and which the Allies have had in imposing peace. The death of Bonaparte rendered our task less difficult, Europe was beginning to breathe more freely, and the wars of the past had left but slight traces, and even those were

gradually dying out. Everything was going along well until yesterday, when one of those unexpected things happened which nearly nullified all these years of labor.

"A young man, a child almost, was at the bottom of the matter. But I was watching his every step; I knew at each hour of the day what he was doing; and at the critical moment I reached forth my hand, when the plot vanished like mist before the sun. Who knows, however, if the next time I shall be so fortunate? Every precaution must be taken. If I had not been on my guard, Europe would have been on fire, and do you know what would have emerged from the conflagration?"

"This is terrible news," exclaimed the Emperor.

"Your Majesty may reassure yourself; but I am bound to tell you what would have arisen out of the ruins—it would have been the Empire. The Em-

pire of which Napoleon dreamed would have been *un fait accompli*. With the Treaty of Paris torn to shreds and the July monarchy gone to the dogs, the King of Rome would have returned to the Tuileries to the sound of the drum. We were close to it.

“But your Majesty does not ask me the name of this young man.”

“I know who it is,” replied the Emperor, wearily; “but what do you intend to do?”

“I have thought very deeply over the subject,” replied Metternich, “and this is the result: Will your Majesty sign this paper? It appoints the Countess Maria Assunta San-Severina to the place of dame d’honneur attached to the person of the Archduchess Sophia.”

The Emperor appended his signature to the paper without a moment’s loss of time. Then he said:

“This order won’t assist you much in

carrying out your purpose, but that is your affair."

Metternich, without replying, took the order of appointment, and, bowing respectfully, left the room.

CHAPTER XIX

LA SAN-SEVERINA

TOWARD the end of the winter of 1801, a danseuse named Fragolletta was the delight of the *habitues* of the Grand Theatre of Venice. The Venetians, who are warm admirers of the ballet, had rarely seen such a sylph on the boards of their favorite theatre. Every evening, after being repeatedly recalled before the curtain, she entered her gondola and disappeared mysteriously from the sight of the swains who were left sighing for her in vain.

The most contradictory stories were current concerning the beautiful danseuse. According to some, she was absolutely circumspect, and lived in retirement with her mother in a secluded part

of the city. Other reports had it that she was deeply smitten with a gondolier, and despised the attentions of the noble and wealthy; that every evening she was borne away in her lover's craft, and enjoyed a devoted love in an obscure lodging-house. In Venice people live for love and music; and it is the city par excellence where little secrets, like the pigeons of St. Mark's, fly rapidly about, and make their appearance suddenly in widely separated places.

As a matter of fact, both rumors were unfounded.

The ballerina, at the age of sixteen, had distinguished with her favor a noble Venetian, whose ancestors for many years had filled the highest places in the republic. His family, however, without going to the wall, had, like many others of the great houses, suffered through the misfortunes of the country, and been obliged to dispose of a large portion of their estate. They were able to still make a good

appearance, and keep their numerous retainers in the antechambers of their palace on the Grand Canal, but it was only by reducing to the lowest possible notch the income of the young count.

This young man, Orio San-Severino, felt it therefore necessary that he should hide his infatuation for the danseuse, as his friends had not failed to impress on him the necessity of his making an alliance with a daughter of one of the wealthy families, that he might restore his family to its former splendor.

If he had had brothers and sisters the young man would have probably yielded to their arguments and married some heiress; but, being the last of his race, and little inclined to purchase wealth in a manner that seemed to him little else than a disgraceful bargain, he preferred to remain poor but free. Fragoletta returned to him a hundred-fold that which he sacrificed for her. Loving the count more than anything except her Creator, she

made each day a new revelation of love for him. She was an accomplished musician, and she spent such time as she was not occupied at the theatre in producing the most delightful harmonies until far on into the night.

Thus they lived, ecstatically happy, in that fortunate land, where the delights of art are within the reach of all. Venice, with its noble monuments of the past; its magnificent palaces standing sentinel over the canals; its myriad of gondolas gliding over the lagoon like swallows grazing the waves, is certainly the locality best adapted to art; and the Italian temperament, devotedly attached to music, poetry, and painting, manifests itself here as nowhere else. The lovers made full use of these bounteous opportunities.

To still further add to their happiness, a child was born to them—a little pink-and-white darling, who was to share their warm nest.

But the Death Angel was not far off.

One evening Fragoletta, on coming out of the theatre, after a performance where the opera-goers were more than usually enthusiastic, expressed a desire to go to the Lido to enjoy the free, fresh air. Soon after her return home she became ill; a few days afterward Orio and the child were alone in their rooms; the soul of the little family had departed.

The bereaved count bestowed on the child the tenderness that he had felt for the mother. He acknowledged her as his own, though by so doing he broke with his family.

Some time after Fragoletta's death he inherited an estate of considerable value, and was thus enabled to live in a manner consistent with his dignity and self-respect. He continued, however, to live for his daughter alone. Abandoning that world for which he had never had a very exalted respect, young as he was, he secluded himself in the palace he had inher-

ited, and, like another Pygmalion, devoted himself to the forming of an ideal Galatea. The young girl grew up to be like one of those masterpieces created by Titian or Giorgione, which are the glory of Italy. Over the ivory bust hung dazzling hair which seemed to have imprisoned within it the ardent rays of the Venetian sun—a royal mantle, with which jealous Nature strove to conceal the harmonies of her virgin figure from the gaze of the profane.

Such, at sixteen, was the Countess Maria Assunta San-Severina. Her father, in addition to taking every means to develop her physical beauty, had secured for her education the most celebrated professors who could be found in Italy. The girl was a ready pupil—ambitious and gifted with unusual intelligence; and she profited to the full by their instructions.

His work was finished, and the count, who had never recovered from the loss of

his mistress, feeling his occupation gone, passed away one summer evening, blessing the child who had, in some part, consoled him for his loss.

The young girl now felt herself indeed alone.

The count's family, which had never pardoned him for his infatuation, thought it would not be a difficult task to cheat the child out of the estate left by her father. The girl had no relations, except a sister of her mother, with whom she at once went to reside, being unable to live alone in the old palace, where everything reminded her of her loss.

It was at the dwelling-place of this aunt that a lawyer's clerk, acting in behalf of her father's family, visited her and attempted to induce her to sign away most of her rights. Ignorant of the legal aspects of the case, and recognizing that her adversaries, with their great influence, would have little trouble in a contest with a friendless girl, she was ready to agree

to a compromise which left her hardly enough to support herself, when something entirely unexpected came to renew her courage and change the course of her ideas.

One morning, after returning from mass at St. Mark's, she crossed the Place, modestly veiled and accompanied by the woman with whom she had taken up her abode, when, face to face, she met the Prince de Metternich, who, as it happened, was just returning from Milan. Transfixed by the beauty of the young girl, he made some inquiries and soon learned everything about her. He had formerly known the Count Orio, and had always admired the nobility of his character, though he did not imitate it. He had never forgotten him, though he had not seen him for many years.

Upon learning that the young girl was in danger of losing her patrimony, his hard heart was softened for the first time. He investigated the claims of the count's

family, assured himself that they were not founded in justice, and, by his powerful influence, succeeded in having the case dropped. The girl, upon learning the rôle that Metternich had played in the matter, thanked him and promised that she would do anything in her power to requite his kindness.

Such was the jewel which the wily diplomat designed to take out of its case and make sparkle under the chandeliers of Schönbrunn. He had little doubt that she would captivate the Duke of Reichstadt, and dispel from his mind all thoughts of France and Colette.

CHAPTER XX

THE TEMPTER

UPON receiving the letter from Metternich directing her to come at once to the imperial residence of Schönbrunn the young countess was both astonished and delighted. It was not surprising to her that the chancellor should have constituted himself her defender, in view of the kind feelings that he entertained toward her father; but she had not supposed that his kindness would reach to the extent of withdrawing her from her obscurity and placing her in such an enviable position with the archduchess—a position usually reserved for those with more quarterings in their coats-of-arms than she possessed. Her father, to be sure, was noble; but then her mother was

a dancer. She knew that people of the theatre, even those of the purest character, were excluded from society. It is not surprising, therefore, that the young girl felt many misgivings as to how she would be received by the high-born women with whom she was about to be brought into contact.

Delighted she certainly was; for, having lived all her life out of the world with her father, she had seen little of the beauties of Venice.

Yielding to destiny, she put her affairs in order, made her preparations for departure, and, after a last visit to the little cemetery where reposed the remains of those she loved so well, she set forth on her journey with the woman whom Metternich had sent to accompany her.

It was in vain that, during the course of their long journey, she tried to draw out her companion, a German woman in the pay of the chancellor. The woman took refuge in an obstinate silence. Vexed

and little disposed to look at the future favorably, the countess almost regretted having obeyed a man of whom she knew so little. Carelessness, the characteristic of youth, and a desire for novelty soon drove away the light clouds, however, and she gave a thankful sigh when they came into view of the chateau.

She had been hardly an hour in the apartment reserved for her when she was sent for by the chancellor.

The wily old man, with a view of winning over the young girl, had thrown off that mask of severity which he could assume at will, and it was in the most paternal manner that he inquired as to her health and the incidents of the journey.

"I cannot tell you," he said, "how grateful I am for your prompt compliance with my request, and I believe I shall be able to prove my gratitude. It will be best for you to rest for a few days, so that you may familiarize yourself with matters here, and become acquainted with the

persons you must associate with. I sent for you so promptly because I desired to give you some instructions as to how to conduct yourself with these people. Before going into that, however, it is necessary for me to impress upon you that you must follow my requirements blindly if you wish to live peacefully and not become a victim of female intrigue. Such things are not dangerous in themselves, but they would wear you out and cause you finally to give up your place here."

"Monseigneur," said the countess, "I will make it my business to see that you are satisfied with me in every particular."

"I expected no less," returned the chancellor. "Now, I believe it is best that I go back to our first interview in Venice. When I saw you first I was literally dazzled by your beauty."

Noticing the girl blushing, he hastened to add:

"My age and the friendship I had for your father permit me to speak with free-

dom, without causing you offence. I made inquiry, and had no trouble in learning all about you. Then I went to work, and was fortunate enough to stop the unjust proceedings that your father's people had instituted against you.

"If I bring these facts up again, it is not to appeal to your gratitude, but to let you know what plans I at once sketched out for you.

"Now I am coming to the matter in hand.

"When Fate put an end to the power of Napoleon, and banished him forever to that isle where he breathed his last, the Emperor Francis I. could do nothing else than receive at court the son born of an unfortunate union of the Archduchess Marie Louise with the Usurper.

"At first there was little trouble in managing the boy; he had but a slight recollection of his father, and that would have faded out in time. Unfortunately,

the archduchess, who should have had nothing more to do with France, brought two young Frenchmen here in her suite; and from that moment the security which we were experiencing disappeared forever. These young men interested themselves in the studies of the Duke of Reichstadt—so called after the city of Reichstadt, which he had received as an appanage. At every hour of the day they were coming and going in the chateau; they were constantly getting up riding and fencing parties with him; and thus, under pretence of perfecting him in physical exercises, they opened to him a new horizon by detailing to him the deeds of his father.

“ I was not informed how things were going until it was too late. I lost no time in packing the Frenchmen home again, but the evil was done; and since then matters have gone from bad to worse.

“ You are the one I have chosen to remedy this.

"In this vast imperial residence, where everything seems to have gone to sleep, as in a fairy story, there is going to be a stupendous change. There are to be hunts, tournaments, and fêtes, and there must be a queen to preside over them—a Queen of Beauty, you understand—and this queen is to be no other than yourself.

"Will you refuse? If you do, you will make a great mistake. The duke is young, amiable, and handsome. And then a ducal crown is not to be despised. Why should you not be a duchess some day? That is better than your title of countess, which is more or less contestable.

"You are silent; but I read in your eyes that you will accept. I warn you that you will have no easy task. You have a rival already. Before you came the duke had begun an intrigue with a young French girl, whose habitation you can see from here."

And, raising the curtain, he showed her Silvère's cottage.

"It is in that cottage, to tell you the truth, that the greatest part of our troubles have been hatched.

"Now you are young and beautiful. I believe you have understood me."

And, as she made no reply, he took her hand and said :

"Be irresistible, and we will make you a duchess.

"Now go to rest. If you stay up longer your complexion will suffer, and those pink roses in your cheeks will fade. Adieu till I see you again."

She departed ; and Metternich rubbed his hands and laughed in the manner that Goethe has made Mephistopheles do.

The shameless tempter had carried up to the top of the mountain that young soul which he had judged could be bought by ambition. If events answered to his hopes, the duke, enmeshed in an amorous intrigue, captivated by the

charms of the new siren, would bid adieu to ambition; and Colette, wounded in her first love and outraged in her pride, would refuse to remain and be a witness to the triumph of her rival. She would leave Schönbrunn, taking Silvère with her.

Thus, without a contest and without a scene, Metternich would attain his end.

CHAPTER XXI

FAILURE

IN planting in the countess's heart the seed which was to bear the fruit suited to his ambitious views, the chancellor had been guided by that marvellous perspicacity which never failed him in his choice of the most fitting instruments to carry out his views. How delighted he would have been could he have read to the depths of her soul, and seen how everything had yielded before the smiling perspective that he had shown her.

Maria Assunta had, until that time, passed a calm, retired existence. Ignorant of life, and absorbed in the studies which occupied her entirely, she had never had the time to consider the future. The proposals of Metternich had caused

her astonishment; but that feeling was of but short duration. She quickly stifled the voice of conscience, which told her that she did wrong to listen to him and consent to be a party to an enterprise of which the end was not difficult to divine. Her ambition was aroused, and it was with hearty good-will that she set about preparing to play the part assigned her.

Everything was made easy for her. The very day after her arrival the chancellor provided her with an abigail, who at once ordered from Vienna the most becoming dresses, and court costumes of fabulous richness and splendor.

The fêtes began. At first they consisted merely of hunting parties. Not knowing how to ride (an accomplishment not required in Venice), she had to remain in the chateau; and she soon learned all about the building.

The duke, up to this time, had concerned himself little with what was going on; but, having met her one day in one of

the galleries, he was so much impressed with her beauty that he could not refrain from making some inquiries about her. From that time she had always the shadowy feeling that he was interested in her. Something which happened a few days afterward could not but confirm that idea.

The aristocratic ladies attached to the person of the archduchess had beheld with vexation the indefinable charms of this stranger, who attracted the admiration of every one. The aides-de-camp, who formed the greater part of the men at the imperial residence, and who were able to refuse nothing to the fair sex, entered into a plot against the newcomer ; and one evening she found herself face to face with the breakers that the chancellor had warned her of. Upon the order of the Archduchess Sophia, la San-Severina was to sing the finale of the “*Servante Maitresse*” of Paisiello. The feeling and *brio* which she showed in the interpre-

tation of this difficult morceau would ordinarily have called forth the enthusiastic bravas of the assembly. Instead of that, however, a dead silence succeeded the last note; and when she left the harpsichord to return to her place no one offered his arm to lead her there.

The duke, who was present, perceiving the ignominious manner in which the young girl was treated, and wishing to give the Austrians a lesson which he thought their haughty arrogance demanded, stepped quickly to her side, and, offering her his arm in the most courteous manner, conducted her to her chair behind the archduchess.

The ice was broken.

The first thing the next morning the countess's abigail knocked at her door and presented her, with the compliments of the Prince de Metternich, a superb fan adorned with dainty miniatures by Watteau. At the bottom of the sandal-wood box containing the gift was a brief note

in the chancellor's writing. She read the following:

"Now is the time; act."

It was the middle of September; and the grove where two incidents of this story have already occurred had not yet lost its leaves. The colors of the trees had undergone a change, and the gold of autumn had succeeded to the green of summer.

It had occurred to the duke to visit again the temple where he had lost his heart. Perhaps he had expected to meet Colette there; certainly he was much surprised to see what he did. La San-Severina, beautiful as the morning, was seated on the marble bench and seemed to him like another Diana the Huntress, who had laid aside for a moment her bow and arrows that she might enjoy like a simple mortal the beauty of the day.

Upon seeing the duke she blushed, as if surprised in a wrong action, and made a movement as if to retire. The duke,

however, begged her not to go, and sat down at her side.

“Monseigneur,” said she, “I bless the chance that brought you here. I shall never forget the important service your Excellency rendered me in putting a stop to the insulting scene of which I was the victim, and which, I beg you to believe, I had done nothing to deserve. My chagrin was so great that I believe I hardly said anything at the time. I take the opportunity to make amends now, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I have always been told that you are generous and noble, and I know now that I was not deceived.”

“*Mon Dieu, mademoiselle,*” he replied, “you exaggerate the importance of the very slight courtesy I was able to render you. You were alone, a prey to the malevolence that its authors did not take the trouble to conceal. I was an indignant witness of that cowardly attack. I simply intervened as a Frenchman and a

gentleman. If you had had a brother present he would have done no less."

"A brother," said the young girl; "alas, I have none. I am alone in the world. If I had a friend——"

And she underlined the last few words with a look of languor, as she moved closer to him.

"A day will come," said the duke, "when you will have a faithful and devoted one, and you will be able to laugh at these silly people. You will be everything to him; and nothing, except his honor, will be so precious to him. At every hour in the day your dear image will be present with him, and he will tremble at the sound of your footfall."

"What you say to me," she replied, "makes the blood course through my veins like molten lava. An ardor which I have never experienced before suffuses me and makes my tongue powerless to utter the words which would explain my thought. Oh, what a lover you are!"

And how happy will the life of that woman be who spends her days with you; for each day will be a festival to her; she will not know what envy is, nor what is meant by hate; she will know no other universe; you will be her all, her king and her god.

“ And when you die, she will follow you, for her life would be darkness——”

The duke said not a word.

Disconcerted and mortified by his silence, she rose up. Reichstadt took her by the hand and made her sit down again; then he said:

“ I understand your emotion, but I did not wish to give you to understand that it is I who love in that manner. She is a simple girl, the daughter of a soldier. If you lean forward, you can see the cottage where she lives. One May morning I gave her my heart in this very grove, and I have never sought to have it returned to me. Fortune has separated us; but, in spite of all obstacles, I love her, for she is

simple and true ; and her lofty soul is the emblem of my beloved France, forever lost to me."

The countess saw clearly that this stricken heart belonged solely to Colette, and that her coquetry had been a waste of time,

She bowed respectfully to him, and returned to the chateau to report to her protector that their hopes were shipwrecked.

CHAPTER XXII

THE VISION

IT is winter.

The cold has come, and a storm, which is every minute becoming more severe, has made havoc in the park and gardens of Schönbrunn. The wind bends over great trees as if they were saplings, demolishes the groves, and beats at the giant walls of the chateau as if it would cast them to the earth.

In the venerable pile many lights can be seen coming and going, carried by nervous and trembling hands. How different this night from that spring evening when the pale light of a student's lamp glimmered in the apartment of L'Aiglon.

The tempest, which has all its own

way outside, seems to have taken possession of the palace within, so extreme is the agitation there. In the spacious galleries servants hurry hither and thither, silent and busy. Up the marble steps leading to the grand entrance an old man, surrounded by priests and attendants, advances solemnly under the bobbing lights of the candles, stopping from time to time to bestow a benediction on the faithful who kneel before him.

It is the Archbishop of Vienna, who is come to administer extreme unction; for one has arrived in the chateau who comes to visit all of this world, poor and rich; and his name is Death.

The Duke of Reichstadt, whom his proud father at his birth named the King of Rome, in a few short hours will have lived his span of life. Having nothing more to hope from destiny, the captive Eaglet is unable to reconcile himself to the thought of living; and, at the bottom of the page where history shall treat of

his life, future generations will read these words : “ *He never reigned.* ”

Poor exile ! There was but one person on earth to treat him with tenderness—a woman, almost a child ; every one else acted with indifference ; and without sympathy he could not live. To his enemies his death will be a relief, for they feared him.

Since that fatal night, when a traitor blocked his way to power, he became a prey to an overpowering weariness. He could no longer endure the monotony of existence ; and, in spite of the encouragement of Silvère and the tender consolation of Colette, he could do naught but count the slow hours. A terrible malady made his last days still more gloomy. It sat at his pillow and kept him awake ; it besieged him without a pause ; it hollowed his cheeks and chiselled deep wrinkles on his brow ; and, raising the curtain which conceals the future, it showed him the grim monster which awaited him.

To die so young! To dream such a glorious destiny and then end in nothing! The young of the Eagle, he must pass away, far from his own aerie, in the nest of a stranger!

The malady every day grows more severe, and he is filled with horror of the great palace, a twin of the marble tomb where, to-morrow, he will be laid away to sleep. If he could warm himself in the sun's rays; if he could but descend to the park and talk with Silvère and sport once more with Colette! But that is impossible, for winter is here. The flowers are gone, and in the grove, sweet birthplace of his love for Colette, the leaves are blown away by the harsh blasts.

Like the grove itself, the young girl has suffered. Misery has added years to her age—years which count double, for the past seems to have extended back infinitely.

Yesterday the young man forced himself to read; he took up one by one those

bulletins where the name of his father, inscribed on every page, recalls some victory. He laid them down again. What was the use of it now?

Feeling that his end had come, the duke sent for the two faithful friends who had partaken of his evil fortune. At this solemn moment he wished to hold their hands in his and delude himself with the idea that he was dying in his own land.

The storm increases in intensity, and his agony redoubles. He dozes off for a moment, but suddenly awakes.

In that supreme moment when the dying, forgetful of the present, see into the Beyond, his face, worn out with suffering, emaciated by watching, recovers, for a fleeting instant, its former beauty. His eyes, dim with the approach of death, become clear, and his pale lips recover their old-time color. Colette and Silvère hold him up in their arms. Then the voice of the duke, loud and vibrant,

sounds forth in the silence of the night above the thunders of heaven's artillery :

“ What marvellous spectacle is that ? ”

“ The fogs of winter have disappeared forever, and the balmy air of spring caresses my hair.

“ I have had a sad dream. God ! how long it lasted !

“ I dreamed I was sad and alone, and that I was a slave. I was chained to a rock, and the sea-waves beat below me.

“ As they receded they left at my feet monsters of frightful aspect which mocked me, powerless.

“ That dream ended—an enormous eagle, with outstretched pinions, descended from the vault of heaven and broke my bonds, scattered my enemies, and placed me at liberty. Since that blessed hour what weary leagues I have travelled !

“ Methought a gentle hand guided me

on my way. How many times in the night, under the vault of heaven, the stars for lamps, have I felt a warm breath fanning my brow!

“ But I have reached the end.

“ The walls of the chateau have disappeared, and France is present and awaits some one. And he for whom they are waiting and for whom the pontiff prepares the sacred chrism is myself, the son of the Eagle.

“ I feel my wings. Let the rush of battle inspire the notes of the organ and make it thunder forth a song. I advance to the sound of a warlike march ; the flags of France bend before me. The soul of France seems to animate their folds. It hovers over me, and I feel a shudder which almost bursts my heart.

“ But who are those two female forms at my side ?

“ I remember.

“ One day, a young girl whom I loved told me that, still a child, her mother had

read the story of the shepherdess sent by heaven to deliver France.

“She is at my side—Joan, the shepherd girl.

“But the other; who is she? A child of the people who made the Huns pause, and said to Attila, ‘No farther shalt thou go.’ She saved Paris from sack and pillage. God sent her to me that I might take her hand and come to Him.

• • • •
“But a black cloud covers the sky. I see a black marsh, and from it serpents issue forth. Good God, grant that they may not come near me!

“They are gone.

“Tell me, dear Colette, do you remember those fleeting hours when under the stars we lived, lived?

“Thus shall we grow old together, and when our heads are crowned with snow we will go to God and continue there for evermore our dream of love.”

“My father awaits me, and I must join

him; but thou wilt come, too—I love thee so!"

The vision had ended.

L'Aiglon had lived.

Silvère, restraining his tears, left Colette to her grief, and, drawing forth from a secret drawer of the desk a tri-color, spread it reverently over the body. In its folds, blackened by powder and torn by shot, Reichstadt was to sleep forever, carrying with him to his foreign grave something of the France he had lost.

Just as Silvère finished his task the door opened quietly.

On the threshold stood Metternich.

At the sight the soldier started as if stung; and, placing himself before the couch where the duke reposed, he said to the intruder:

"Monseigneur, your task is performed; rejoice and be glad. But do not tempt God by remaining here."

"Do you see that kneeling woman?
It is France who weeps.

"Go! Your presence is an insult to
her woe."

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